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KERRANG!

Deaf or glory . . .

KISS!



**OZZY!
AC/DC!
HEART!
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SOS!
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THUNDERSTICK!
DEMON!
CHINATOWN!
HEAVEN!
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The official HM charts, specially compiled for Kerrang!
from a nationwide survey of 50 specialist shops

SINGLES

- 1 FOR THOSE ABOUT TO ROCK (WE SALUTE YOU) AC/DC Atlantic
- 2 FREEBIRD Lynyrd Skynyrd MCA
- 3 RENDEZVOUS Tygers Of Pan Tang MCA
- 4 CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT YOU Scorpions Harvest
- 5 3 HEAT OF THE MOMENT Asia Geffen
- 6 LOSING MY GRIP Samson Polydor
- 7 19 EYE OF THE TIGER Survivor Scotti Brothers
- 8 4 YOU KEEP ME HANGIN' ON Rods Arista
- 9 5 CRIMSON AND CLOVER Joan Jett & The Blackhearts Epic
- 10 PARANOID Black Sabbath Nems 12"
- 11 WHO'S GONNA WIN THE WAR Hawkords Flicker
- 12 17 IF YOU WANT MY LOVE Cheap Trick CBS
- 13 11 SITTING PRETTY Silverwing Mayhem
- 14 8 THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST Iron Maiden EMI
- 15 8 SHE DON'T FOOL ME Status Quo Vertigo
- 16 14 ENOUGH IS ENOUGH April Wine Capitol
- 17 12 BIG GUNS Rory Gallagher Chrysalis
- 18 KEEP THE FIRE BURNING Reo Speedwagon Epic



- 19 MONY MONY Gaskin Rondellet
- 20 9 FANTASY Aldo Nova CBS
- 21 10 I BELIEVE IN YOU Y & T A&M
- 22 18 CALL ME (FOUR CUTS E.P.) Diamond Head MCA
- 23 25 ALRIGHT NOW Free Island E.P.
- 24 26 MAIDEN JAPAN Iron Maiden EMI
- 25 23 MAYDAY Santers Ready Import
- 26 13 NO MORE LONELY NIGHTS Saracen Decca
- 27 27 SPEND THE NIGHT Cheetah CBS
- 28 15 IN EUROPE Meatloaf CBS 12" Import
- 29 22 STILL THEY RIDE Journey CBS Import
- 30 20 AMERICA Bernie Torme Kamaflage

IMPORT ALBUMS

- 1 EYE OF THE TIGER Survivor Scotti Brothers
- 2 TOO FAST FOR LOVE Motley Crue Leathur Import
- 3 REVENGE Mayday A&M
- 4 BATTLEHYMNS Manowar Liberty
- 5 BOLD AS BRASS Bodine Rhinoceros
- 6 THRILL OF THE KILL The Hunt Passport
- 7 STRANGER Stranger Epic
- 8 MEGAFORCE 707 Boardwalk
- 9 CAN'T WAIT Piper A&M
- 10 ONE FALSE MOVE Harlequin CBS

ALBUMS

- 1 PICTURES AT ELEVEN Robert Plant Swansong
- 2 SCREAMING FOR VENGEANCE Judas Priest CBS



- 3 18 NUGENT Ted Nugent Atlantic
- 4 WILD DOGS Rods Arista
- 5 2 KILLERS Kiss Polygram
- 6 20 GOOD TROUBLE Reo Speedwagon CBS
- 7 4 ALDO NOVA Aldo Nova CBS
- 8 5 TURN OUT THE LIGHTS Bernie Torme CBS
- 9 6 THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST Iron Maiden EMI
- 10 3 WIRED OUT Raven Neal
- 11 12 VINYL CONFESSIONS Kansas Kirshner
- 12 THE UNEXPECTED GUEST Demon Carrere
- 13 8 ASIA Asia Geffen
- 14 7 METAL ON METAL Anvil Attic
- 15 22 EYE OF THE TIGER Survivor Scotti Brothers Import
- 16 9 THE EAGLE HAS LANDED Saxon Carrere
- 17 13 TOO FAST FOR LOVE Motley Crue Leathur Import
- 18 17 NICE 'N DIRTY Rage Carrere
- 19 19 FOR THOSE ABOUT TO ROCK AC/DC Atlantic
- 20 BEFORE I FORGET Jon Lord EMI
- 21 10 SPECIAL FORCES .38 Special A&M
- 22 11 RESTLESS BREED Riot WEA
- 23 14 PRIVATE AUDIENCE Heart Portrai
- 24 27 REVENGE Mayday A&M Import
- 25 15 BLACKOUT Scorpions Harvest
- 26 16 SCREAMING BLUE MURDER Girlschool Bronze
- 27 26 POWERPLAY April Wine Capitol
- 28 BATTLE HYMNS Manowar Liberty Import
- 29 PREDATOR Bitches Sin Heavy Metal
- 30 25 BREAKING THE CHAINS Don Dokken Carrere
- 31 34 EARTHSHAKER Y & T A&M
- 32 29 BAT OUT OF HELL Meatloaf Epic
- 33 23 EXTRATERRESTRIAL LIVE Blue Oyster Cult CBS
- 34 38 DEADRINGER Meatloaf Epic
- 35 33 BOLD AS BRASS Bodine Rhinoceros Import
- 36 24 THRILL OF THE KILL The Hunt Passport Import
- 37 STRANGER Stranger Epic Import
- 38 40 ONE ON ONE Cheap Trick CBS
- 39 28 I LOVE ROCK 'N' ROLL Joan Jett & The Blackhearts Epic
- 40 21 RIDES AGAIN Doc Holliday CBS

Charts compiled by MRB

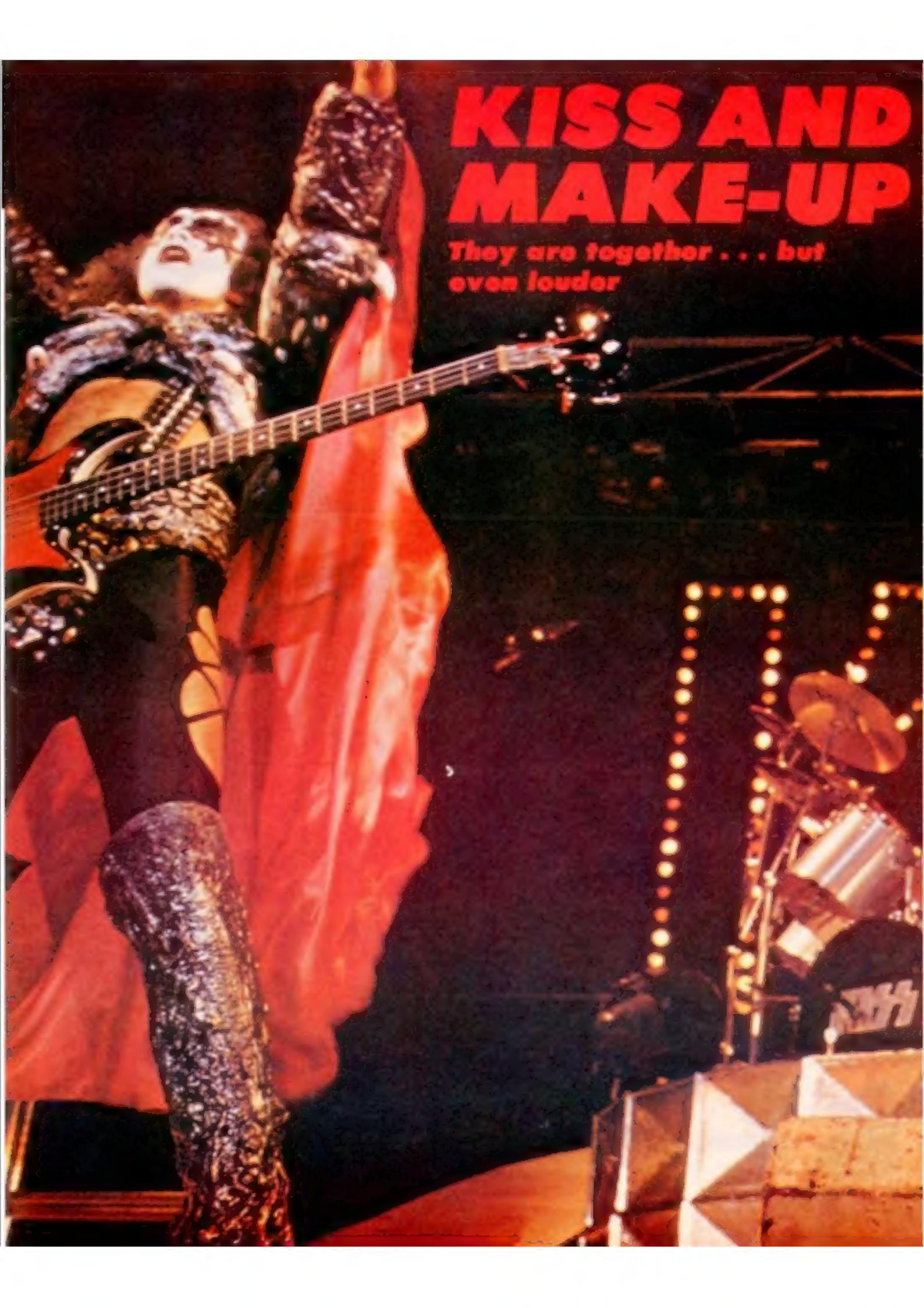
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KISS AND MAKE-UP

*They are together . . . but
even louder*

IN SPRING 1974 radio stations across America called on their listeners to start kissing. The response was dramatic. Couples not known for their ardour joined lips with a vengeance while, despite opposition from local authorities — a station in Minnesota was busted for corrupting minors — two teenagers broke the world record with a kiss lasting 36 hours. Their prize: eight days in Acapulco, a trip to Los Angeles and the chance to see a bizarrely-made-up band from New York...

In their search for publicity Kiss have left few stones unturned. Films, comics, cartoons, TV specials, the band have appeared in them all and, while the Kissing marathon wasn't their idea (a group of DJs in Florida got things underway), they were quick to see its potential. Network news picked up on the event and

pushed the Kiss name to the fore but the press, convinced that glitter was dead (or should be, at least), showed no appetite for the band or their promo antics.

Withdrawing a safe bargepole's distance and shaking heads sadly, critics pealed the four with as much rotting verbiage as they could muster, oblivious to the fact that at a grassroots level a cosmetic crusade was already underway. A generation weaned on the excesses of Alice Cooper didn't care a jot that in the eyes of the press Kiss were nothing more than derivative, decibel-hungry hyperstars. To them this was the business, music of the gods, and they got behind their new champions with single-minded force.

In 1974 Kiss were a third-on-the-bill outfit warming up for the likes of Manfred Mann and

Savoy Brown; by 1975 they'd reached headline status and by the late 'seventies were arguably America's most popular rock'n'roll band, drawing about a million pounds a year from merchandising and numbering fevered four- and five-year-olds, the peanuts 'n' popcorn brigade, in their ranks of supporters.

The release of 'Music From The Elder', their 16th album, in October 1980, however, signalled a change. Previously the band had kept things pretty simple, at times downright dumb, but now they seemed to want more recognition, to be taken seriously as a creative musical force. The grosser outer layers of the

CONTINUED OVER PAGE



PIC BY ROBERT ELLIS

'If we think that mating elephants onstage is what to do, then we'll do it'

FROM PAGE 5

image were peeled away, the media merchandising overlaid toned down and the band came up with that most dreaded thing: the concept album.

This one, however, worked very well indeed, avoiding all the usual pitfalls and finally winning over recalcitrant reviewers, though the Kiss Army rank and file were generally less enthusiastic. It failed to match the commercial success of its predecessors and soon after its release word came that the band had said goodbye to both Ace Frehley, apparently on the nether end of a Schenker-style slide into the land of pink elephants, and manager Bill Aucoin, with them since 1973, and undeniably instrumental in their success.

Rumours whipped through *Kerrang!*'s spacious penthouse office faster than Pete Makowski on copy day. Who was in, who was out, it became impossible to tell, and the recently-released 'Kiss Killers', yet another compilation album (for the European market only this time) filled out by four excellent new tracks, further clouded the issue. What was going on? Certainly the split with Aucoin was true, there was no doubt about that, but the new management insisted that, as far as the band themselves were concerned, Ace was still in and all was well. 'They're at the Record Plant in Los Angeles recording a new album' we were told and after some hasty negotiation a meeting was arranged.

MY LAST brush with Kiss in any shape, size or form had been an interview with Simmons and Stanley at Aucoin's swanky New York office just prior to the release of '(MF)TE', and while the Kiss co-founders proved friendly enough, introductions were formal, contracts had to be signed and the whole encounter was heavy with a business air. This time, however, things couldn't have been more different. Rather than being ushered into the band's presence by a faceless emissary it's Paul Stanley, clad in T-shirt, shorts and trainers, who extends his hand in the Record Plant foyer. Photo sessions around the time of 'The Elder' showed his Danskin under definite strain in the midriff zone, but now he's looking considerably more trim.

'Yeah, I'm getting into shape for our tour,' he explains, leading the way through the studio proper and into a jumbled backroom where Gene Simmons, Eric Carr and two others I can't put a name to (neither of them Ace) are peering intently at a small cardboard model.

'Come and look at this,' beckons Simmons, making slight adjustments to what, on closer inspection, turns out to be a scale mock-up of the new stage show. I'd had a sneak glimpse of 'The Elder' stage (later scrapped) in model form and that was founded on simple, symmetrical lines. This one... well I don't want to spoil the surprise (for surprise it will be) so let's just say that it's different, a more completely developed concept than anything the band have worked with before, the 'Destroyer' stage set included, and though metal will feature prominently in its construction it should prove a good deal more flexible than previous set-ups.

Gene, the staunchest defender of the Kiss cause, proceeds with an enthused rundown of what will happen where, when and to whom, to which my response is an unwittingly trill: 'It looks good.' The Demon, always after an extreme reaction, negative or positive, draws

back agast. 'It looks good,' he repeats. 'That's like saying diamonds are nice. I think this set is gonna kick everybody in the balls. This is the ultimate rock set!'

The two unidentified onlookers are introduced as the men responsible for putting it together and, after more pondering and fiddling on the part of the band, they're given the OK to start work. That settled the pair depart and we gather round for the interview. The ice already broken, the opener is inevitable: where's Ace?

'Well, he's not around as much these days,' says Paul. 'He's got a wife and a kid and for a while now they've been his priority. He was here but now he's back home in Connecticut.'

'We've been together for about 10 years,' adds Gene, 'and there's a certain amount of flexibility you have to have because of the people that you care about. So the fact that Ace has to deal with certain domestic things that are important to his lifestyle is something you understand and live with. He's married, we're not.'

THE BAND are adamant, however, that the ties of family life haven't prevented him playing on both 'Killers' and the forthcoming studio album 'Creatures Of The Night', and that when they resume touring duties in September he'll be with them. Apparently, he issued a statement to the press, in America at least, making these very points, though that doesn't necessarily disprove the rumour (Kiss rumour 387 subsection b) that he left and later rejoined.

'Yes, he did,' says Gene, candidly. 'He does that every year. He goes: 'Look, guys, I'm really pissed off. I'm going home; call me in three weeks...''

Paul: 'There really have been times in the dressing rooms where one of us in the course of putting on the make-up will say: 'Hey, I'm getting very tired, I don't know if I can keep going. But it's 10 years later and there's still a Kiss.'

It was also rumoured at one point that you were auditioning other guitarists. True?

'Yes, we'd be lying if we said that wasn't so,' admits Gene. 'When Peter (Criss) was having his ups and downs physically we went and had other drummers line up just to make sure we could fulfil our obligations and it's the same thing this time because we've committed ourselves to 100 dates which is the first part of the tour... Everyone's got personal problems. I like to, I don't know, bang my head against a wall, and sometimes some of us like to do other things, but we don't want to feel that because of one person we may not be able to complete the tour.'

'Ace will be with us,' says Eric, slipping quietly into the conversation, 'but we may also have another guitarist at the side of the stage to supplement the sound. He wouldn't be a member of the band and wear make-up, just a sideman.'

Now, personally, I've never noticed any gaps in the Kiss live output (an American guitarist once likened their performance to 'putting your head next to a sawmill'). He was wrong: they're louder but more than that the addition of even a sideman is bound to raise question marks, as large and luminous as the band's logo, over Ace's ability to cut it onstage.

'It's just a possibility,' assures Gene, noting my concern. 'We want to do everything that's going to make Kiss better and more ex-

citing not stopping at anything. If we think that mating elephants onstage is what we have to do, then we'll do it.'

The 'is he? isn't he?' controversy surrounding Ace would seem to have begun when the band appeared without him on a live telecast to the San Remo Festival, Italy, from NY's Studio 54.

'Literally up until half an hour before we went on we were sitting there waiting for him,' recalls Paul. 'There was a limo outside his house but we knew he was very, very ill.'

What was wrong?

'He had some kind of stomach disorder. Anyway, it finally became clear that he wasn't gonna make it and if the broadcast hadn't been live more than likely we would have cancelled it, but with all the cameras there we said: 'Screw it, let's go for it.'

'I know, the stuff about Ace isn't the first time we've read or heard rumours about ourselves,' reflects Gene. 'But we're not reclusive rock stars who live on tops of mountains — people really should ask us!'

AT THE moment, however, the band are totally immersed in their 'Creatures Of The Night' LP, set for an early September release, and aren't overly concerned with what's being said beyond the studio walls.

'This is, like, our bunker,' says Paul. 'We've been in the studio pretty much 12-14 hours for the last 3-4 months, bustin' our humps making rock'n'roll. We started with the four cuts on 'Killers', which was the beginning of our recording session, and went from that into 'Creatures'.'

The US version of 'COTN' will probably contain three tracks from 'Killers' — 'Nowhere To Run', 'Partners In Crime' and 'I'm A Legend Tonight' — though what form the European version will take has yet to be determined. It seems likely, however, that two of the tracks will be different leaving an almost totally new album. Altogether the band are laying down 14 numbers and it will be up to the record company in each territory to decide what to include to avoid repetition, though that still leaves the question why 'Killers' was released at all. Wouldn't it have been better to save all the new songs for 'Creatures'?

'Well, our label wanted something to hold everybody over until the next studio album,' explains Paul. 'I don't think at this point we're huge fans of compilation records 'cos we've had enough of 'em. But what makes it worthwhile for us are the four new songs which are pretty indicative of what Kiss is about right now.'

But couldn't they have been put on an EP? 'Yes,' responds Gene. 'And we talked about an EP, a single and all that. But we finally decided on the 'Killers' format because in a lot of countries some of the catalogue isn't out or isn't permanent and also because there's a completely new audience out there who may not be familiar with the history.'

(Music From) 'The Elder' may not have been a huge commercial success but in many ways 'Creatures' is less a radical change than a development. The production's different, it's true, a shift away from the elaborate, layered sound favoured by Bob Ezrin and a return to the 'live', spontaneous approach that made 'Rock'N'Roll Over' such a gem, but the band continue to collaborate on the writing front (a tradition revived with 'The Elder') and the music retains a degree of sophistication. 'Smart Metal' is now the ultimate aim, though Metal is clearly the operative word...

While the Record Plant proved adequate for recording the new 'Killers' cuts, the band felt that for 'Creatures' they needed a more powerful drum sound and, after scouring LA, eventually set up the kit in a large rehearsal hall adjacent to a studio. Here, in conjunction with co-producer Michael James Jackson, a man whose credentials lie a long way from the heavy rock field, they cut all the drum parts for 'COTW' and re-recorded those on 'Nowhere To Run' and 'Partners In Crime', so the versions that appear on the US 'Creatures' should have considerably more kick.

"Oh, the drums are in a different league now," says Eric.

Paul: "Yeah, the material on 'Creatures' is about the strongest we've ever done."

Gene: "This album is meant to tell everyone no more fooling around, no more artistic self-panderings, and that's in no way apologising for anything we've done because we're really proud of 'The Elder'. But this is right between the eyes..."

Like 'Rock N' Roll Over'?

"I would imagine harder. This is... Metal-n-roll. In certain respects the heaviest album we've done."

FOLLOWING our conversation the band play me two new songs from 'Creatures', the title track opener and another called 'Still In Love With You'. Both Paul Stanley compositions and both making use of 48 tracks (two 24-track recordings synched together), they successfully rattle the mammoth Record Plant speakers while still retaining a classy edge. The latter, a song of no mean power launched on a gentle acoustic intro, reminiscent of Stanley's solo album win-

ner 'Tonight You Belong To Me'. Metal-n-roll indeed.

Good news for fans of early Kiss is that this rediscovered aggression also looks set to surface in the band's live show. Although nothing has yet been decided, the new set will probably feature harder material, both new and old ('Deuce' has been rehearsed) and last longer than any they've played before. And what of the songs on '(MF)TE', will they feature?

"I don't know," says Gene. "The truth is we're gonna sit down and make up a list of numbers and that list will change further when we start to play."

Paul: "I was talking to a fan about a week ago who wanted to know when we were going out on tour and surprisingly he said: 'Are you gonna play 'The Oath' or anything like that?' We'll see..."

"And we remain flexible," adds Gene. "When we were doing 'The Elder' we said we wanted to build a new stage and do an 'Elder' piece in the show but as we talked about it and put it together we found it wasn't to our liking so we didn't do it."

For the moment at least the entire 'Elder' project, including the proposed book and film, has been shelved, though one rumour (yes, another one) claimed that the band would give it an airing at Donington this year.

"We were not asked to play that festival," says Gene, deliberately, "but under the proper conditions we'd love to do it. As for 'The Elder'... we never even got to the point where we started to rehearse it."

But what if it had been an out-and-out success, would you have stuck with it then?

"Well... we were talking about an 'Elder II' but I think we would have gone hard anyway. I

wanted to call it 'War Of The Gods', it would have been the conflict."

If greasepaint-in-the-blood fanatics weren't overly pleased with '(MF)TE', the band's accompanying change of image thrilled them even less. The clipped hair, the sensible heels, it seemed that Kiss had finally succumbed to critical flak and were attempting to bring themselves at least partly into line with the fickle whims of fashion.

"Yeah, people had this idea that we were going to turn into designer Kiss," says Paul. "But the look was only for the album and when we hit the road we'll look like we've always done."

Gene: "In fact, if anything it's going to be more hardcore Kiss. We've got new costumes, sleek, black and in some ways massive, and you'll see the return of platform boots and the return of hair. By the time we get back onstage we're gonna have hair on our teeth!"

A trifle optimistic perhaps but even if the band manage no more than five o'clock shadow on the dance floor, it won't stop them launching their tour in the Venezuelan capital of Caracas. Though only their second visit to South America (a three-day promo trip to Mexico was the first), they're reliably informed that selling out a 135,000-seater for 3-5 nights is a very real possibility, but this time around they've decided to play just 4-5 nights in a 10,000-seater as a way of honing the show for a string of dates in the deep South deep West of the USA, 14 of which should feature Iron Maiden as support.

NO BRITISH dates are yet on schedule but the band's attitude to coming here is clear.

Continues pg 40



Interview by
Dante Bonatti

U.S., CANADIAN or British penfriends wanted. 17-25-year-old, male or female. I'm a 19-year-old Swedish male HM lover into Y&T, KOT, Ozzy, Weebit, Blackfoot, Raven, Reds, etc. I'd also like to exchange facts and thoughts with guitarists all over the world. I play lead guitar in a heavy rock band called Overdrive. Janné Stark, Mellanbacken 17, S-290 71 Morrum, Sweden.

HEAVY METALLER wants to write to or meet other rockers who like Diamond Head, Holocaust, Sweet Savage, Accept, Silvermountain, etc. I'm 20 and willing to answer any heavy correspondence. Till then, Up The Hammer, Wayne Archibald, 1724 Maxwell St., Arvida, Quebec, Canada G7S 1J6.

I'M A 16-year-old metal freak who is into Anvil, Motley, Holocaust, Tank, and many more. If you are a heavy freak then drop a line to: Peter Eriksson, Tröstö 1, 21100 Helsingborg, Sweden.

HEY, WE are two females of 18, looking to hear from guys around the same age or older, especially from the UK. A sense of humor and a bit of intelligence preferred, but not mandatory. We're into Rainbow, AC/DC, Def Leppard, Iron Maiden, Black Sabbath and anything else that sounds lead. Also interested in trading badges and mags. Write to us because we're bored. Pam or Deanne (or both), 324 SE 2 Ave, Dania, Florida, 33004, USA.

PENPALS!

Just send your details to Penpals, Kerrang! 40 Long Acre, London WC2. We'll print as many as we can in each issue of Kerrang!



"I hate football!"

FEMALE PENPALS wanted, must have long hair and hate soccer and diners, fags and booze. I'm 18 (taste in music doesn't really matter). Paul Bolger, 8 Arbor Road, Lisduggan, Waterford, Eire.

FEMALE HEADBANGER, 19, wants to hear from anyone, any age, anywhere in this crazy world, into Maiden, Scorp, Priest, etc., and NWOBHM. Also have fanzine "Heavy Metal Thunder". Write to: Shelia Gray, 2020 Miramar No. 3, Los Angeles, California 90057, USA.

STATUS QUO, Bridlington Spa, April 27. Will Richard and Phil from Mirfield get in touch with Rachel and Sue at 45 Eastfield Road, Keyingham, Nr Hull. See, we ain't from Hartlepool.

TWO DUTCH girls (16 and 17) into HM would like to write to longhaired male HM freaks between 18 and 22, from all over the world. We are into Maiden, Accept, Saxon, Scorpions, Y&T, Priest and lots of others. Write to: Jyssine Snyder, Klaprooslaan 2g, 387 GE Hoevelaken, Holland or Marjan van Eeden, v. Bemmelstraat 15, 3818 PA Aarschot, Holland.

FUN-LOVING 20-year-old biker into Skynyrd, Zepp, Doors and Hendrix seeks female penpal companion, 17-25, with a possible view to attending gigs. Photos appreciated. Tim, 8 Castle Mead, Hemel Hempstead, Herts.

TORN AND LONELY Zeppelite (but still optimistic) seeks friendship from any part of this meagre planet. Any age, male or female. Must enjoy the good life. I'm male, 18, and sick to death of exams. Neil Merrick, 45 Hawill Rise, Churwell, Merley, Leeds LS27 7QL.



Sheena Easton lookalikes see below.

HELLO THERE, I'm a 15-year-old rocker, into Blackfoot, 38 Special, Nazareth, Queen, Foreigner, Journey and many American rock groups. No Motorhead freaks, please. I'm looking for a female HR freak between 14 and 17 around my area. Sheena Easton lookalikes, please, to go to gigs and meet. Photo please. Gary Shaw, 6 Glynn Terrace, Thornton Road, Bradford.

ANY RAVEN/ANVIL fanatics who would like to keep in touch with a 17-year-old male to exchange news, info, etc. If so, write to: Terry, 12 Robinhood Close, Farnborough, Hants.

ARE YOU obnoxious? Obnoxious? Sarcastic? Motorhead-hating? Lepp-loving? Tolkien Orwell-adoring? Manchester-loving? Any of the three major sexes with an IQ of over 10. I need you. Elaine B, 2 The Mall, Stalybridge, Cheshire.

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Noise!

MORE PIXI!
MORE KIX!
MORE HITZ!

AT YOUR NEWSAGENT NOW

Continued from pg 7



"Ask us," says Gene. "WE WANT. We'd like to be in England right now playing our butts off, but it's gonna have to be at the right place at the right time."

Kiss' last live appearance was in New Zealand in 1980 which means that Europe hasn't seen them in two years, America in three, Canada in four and Japan in five. Inevitably, their relationship with the fans has suffered though they hope that breaking with Aucoin will help restore previous close ties.

"We wanna get hungry again," says Gene. "When we got Bill (Aucoin) a lot of the day-to-day workings of the band were handed over, rightly, to a manager and I think that at a certain point we became a bit remote; we got less feedback from the fans and the stage shows didn't always come out the way we wanted. This time,

however, we're having the meetings and we're hiring the people. We've got to get in touch with what made us in the first place."

Whether assuming these extra duties will prove a help or a hindrance remains to be seen, but preparations for the tour would seem to be going ahead without fuss. Paul's having guitars built by B. C. Rich and Charvel, Eric's negotiating with both Tama and Pearl and Gene has two new basses on the way, though he plans the wield the 'axe' a lot more frequently from now on (and not just for playing) as a way of adding a fresh hint of drama to the show.

"I'll also be giving birth on-stage," he proclaims dramatically. "It's a new effect."

Eric looks puzzled. "Will that be after you mate with the elephant," he enquires, scratching his head, "or before?"